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SENSITIVE
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FOR NEA/I/ECON, ISN/CTR AND OES/ENRC

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TAGS: [ECON](#) [EAID](#) [SENV](#) [SOCI](#) [EWWT](#) [KGHG](#) [IZ](#)
SUBJECT: ENVIRONMENT MINISTER REQUESTS ASSISTANCE

REF: A) BAGHDAD 959; B) BAGHDAD 960

¶1. (U) This is an action request. See paragraph 6.

¶2. (SBU) Summary. During a meeting of the Environment Working Group under the Strategic Framework Agreement on June 22, 2009, the Minister for the Environment requested USG assistance for environmental legislation and regulation, laboratory capacity development, and environmental education programs. End Summary.

Environment Working Group

¶3. (U) The Environment Working Group under the Strategic Framework Agreement (SFA) met on June 22, 2009 to discuss a work plan and next steps. The meeting was hosted by the Minister of the Environment Narmin Othman Hassen, and included from the GOI Dr. Kamal H. Latif, Deputy Minister, and Ali Al-Lami, Chief Researcher and Minister Advisor. The U.S. co-chair had been Dr. Maged Hussein, who was tragically killed on May 25, 2009 by a bomb attack. The Minister and Deputy Minister praised Maged Hussein for all the superb help he had provided to Iraq and the Environment Ministry in particular.

Key Goals for Bilateral Cooperation

- ¶4. (SBU) The meeting participants agreed on several goals for bilateral cooperation.
- Enhance the technical capacity of the Ministry of Environment to assess and protect the environment and any impacts that may affect human health.
 - Support the Ministry of Environment in its development of legal, regulatory, and policy frameworks for the protection of the environment.
 - Facilitate integration of Iraq into the relevant international institutions and standard setting bodies.
 - Support the Ministry of Environment's outreach programs to increase awareness of the key environmental issues facing Iraq.
 - Facilitate inter-ministerial cooperation for environmental restoration, including in key areas such as the Marshlands.

Training and Technical Capacity

¶5. (SBU) The Minister expressed great interest in "train the trainer" programs, in particular, related to laboratory and environmental assessments. Dean Sinclair, of the Iraq Scientist Engagement Program (ISEP), suggested he could investigate additional training opportunities under ISEP. ISEP provided similar training and technical assessments for other ministries.

Environmental Laws and Regulations

¶16. (SBU) The Minister welcomed assistance on environmental laws and regulations. She indicated the Ministry needs to change from "monitoring" environmental issues to becoming a real regulator, with appropriate framework legislation. She also sought a better sense for herself and her officials of U.S. and international best practices and environmental standards. She specifically requested USG assistance in this area.

ACTION REQUEST FOR WASHINGTON: Embassy requests Washington's assistance in determining whether the existing Commercial Law Development Program (CLDP) for Iraq could be expanded to include environmental legislation and regulation to assist the Ministry of Environment under the Strategic Framework Agreement.

Strategic Planning

¶17. (SBU) A key objective of the bilateral working group is helping the Ministry to develop a strategic plan. In the past, strategic planning has been geared toward five-year goals. The Minister indicated a strong desire to take a comprehensive, long-term view to strategic plan development. The Deputy Minister suggested we first look at challenges faced in the environmental sector and build a plan around the most critical issues. The Minister stated that those responsible for polluting need to be a part of the plan development as well, such as the Ministries of Industry, Oil, and others. The plan should also consider international organizations such as the relevant United Nations agencies and the World Health

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Organization. It must also link to Iraq's National Development Strategy. The Embassy will explore the possibility of ISEP program assistance for strategic planning training for the Ministry.

Improving the Central Laboratory

¶18. (SBU) The Minister described the new laboratory structure in the Ministry for detection and monitoring of air, water, and soil contaminants. There are four regional labs (Baghdad, South, Middle and North), with Baghdad serving as the central lab. The Ministry seeks equally capability for all labs; however, all need more equipment. Dean Sinclair said he would look at what additional assistance ISEP could provide.

Bilateral Exchanges

¶19. (SBU) The Minister welcomed any and all bilateral exchanges that would assist the Ministry in developing its capacity and understanding of international standards and environmental regulatory agency function.

Ground and Surface Water Monitoring

¶10. (SBU) Dean Sinclair described training provided by the ISEP related to remote water monitoring equipment in April. The 26 people trained were mostly in the Ministry of Environment. The program was a success and the USG would like to donate the equipment to the GOI. An agreement was developed by the Embassy, which will be reviewed by the Ministry's attorney and then signed. Upon signature, the equipment will be delivered to the Central Laboratory. This is an example of very practical training that can be put to use immediately when the equipment is delivered.

Environmental Education and Outreach

¶11. (SBU) During the discussion of key goals, the Minister described her commitment to education and awareness outreach programs and requested these efforts be added as key goals on the work plan. She described programs in Sadr City that reached over 5,000 school children, designed to educate teachers and students about environmental issues. In addition, she highlighted UNEP programs offered in Southern Iraq, geared towards women, as the working population in this area is mainly comprised of women. She also said that any environmental education program must involve local people closest to the issues. "Locals know everything about the environment," she said, noting in particular the poor Marsh Arabs who live in that region.

Education and Scholarships

¶12. (SBU) The Deputy Minister inquired about scholarship programs. Dr. Paul Savello of ITAO described the Ministry of Higher Education's program to provide 10,000 scholarships to Iraqis. The Minister indicated that she will meet with the Minister of Higher Education and will pursue this option. The Fulbright program with Iraq has also been recently expanded, and could provide opportunities to train Iraqis in environmental studies and related engineering programs.

Marshlands-Everglades Exchange

¶13. (SBU) We mentioned to the Minister that officials in the South Florida Water Management District (SFWMD) were enthusiastic about having an exchange on the Marshlands, with details to be further defined (reftels A, B). We asked which Ministries would be the appropriate counterparts for the SFWMD. The Minister responded that both the Environment Ministry and the Ministry of Water Resources would be counterparts. "We can't do anything without water. The Marshlands are a big issue for both Ministries," she said. The Marshlands are a big issue for both Ministries," she said. The Embassy mentioned Nature Iraq and the Marsh Research Center at Dhi Qar University as possibly being included in any exchange programs. The Minister said that local involvement would be essential for success, particularly the Marshland area residents, but that she would prefer that we start with government-to-government activity as a starting point. The Embassy will explore additional ideas with Washington and the SFWMD for exchanges.

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